



# Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) Healthy Weight Team Update

December 2025

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## 1. Introduction

Welcome to the Healthy Weight Team's end of year highlights! This year has been transformative, and we're thrilled to share some of the progress we've made together. Our focus to improve access to good quality and affordable food in the towns and villages of CTM requires reshaping the local food environment through influencing policy, strengthening inter-organisational partnerships, and working together to drive real change. We're proud to celebrate a wonderful event, winning the CTMUHB [Seren Award for Inclusion and Respect](#), a testament to our focus on listening to the community with empathy, compassion, and commitment to equality. Over the past 12 months, we've gathered 96 powerful stories from 160 voices and collaborated with more than 30 organisations to influence services and create healthier communities. Together, we've supported initiatives like the Child Poverty Grant for Breast Feeding Peer Supporters, the Healthy Housing Alliance, Treherbert Initiative and we influenced the launch of 'Active Soles' as part of the Healthy and Active Travel Charter. Read on to discover the impact of our hyperlocal systems experiment in Treherbert and celebrate the successes of our three food partnerships.

We hope you can see how these achievements are shaping lasting structural change and contributing to the creation of healthy environments which will allow the children being born in CTM today to grow up to be a healthy weight.

## Team Updates



### Shakira Leslie

Shakira is a Senior Public Health Practitioner with a background of working in Public Health Wales, Health Improvement Division

and CTM UHB Public Health Team. Having worked on a range of different programme and topic areas such as youth smoking prevention/ and tobacco control, healthy weight, Making Every Contact Count and cancer and screening.



### Jessica Bingham

Jess is a Public Health Practitioner with the CTM Local Public Health Team, leading initiatives

that promote healthy weight and improve community well-being. Previously with Public Health Wales, Jess supported key workstreams in mental well-being, education, and parent engagement.

## 2. Areas of Focus



**Food  
Environment -  
listening to our  
communities and  
building  
relationships**

**Over the last year**, we have continued to build relationships with key stakeholders in the food system, including our communities, to understand the factors affecting access to good quality affordable food in the towns and villages across CTM. Hear more about the work in Treherbert, a hyper local system approach, on page 6.

**We have also continued to work with some of our Housing Associations, Food Pantries, Community Groups, and Families taking part in PIPYN** (a Children and Families Programme providing support to make healthy choices) to hear all about why it is great to live in this area, what needs to improve and any hopes and dreams for future food access.

As a key stakeholder you would have heard how we are engaging with our communities using a **strengths-based approach called Appreciative Enquiry**.

The insights we have gathered have helped us to sense check some of our earlier work and to ensure we are recommending actions which are as close as possible to the root cause of the issues our residents are experiencing around food. We now have a greater understanding of what is holding our food environment in place, what action will have the greatest population impact and who needs to be part of the collaborative actions.

We have heard that CTM is an area with lots of assets and strong community cohesion. We want to ensure our community is continually involved in this movement towards creating equal access to good quality affordable food and celebrate the connections already in the system. **This work is not without its challenges** however and we often see short term funding and short-term solutions in this space which do not address root causes. As systems leads we spend time understanding how the current structures we work within make changing the food environment difficult.

**It is going to take all of us to make the changes we need.**

**Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr and Bridgend Food Partnerships lead the good food movement as part of the Sustainable Food Places Scheme**

**Sustainable Food Places** is a social movement bringing together food partnerships across the UK that are driving innovation and best practice on all aspects of healthy and sustainable food. Food Partnerships take a systems approach aiming to address a range of different, yet connected food issues and work together to achieve change. As well as working collaboratively with key food system partners to drive change, they inspire ideas, enable innovation and empower communities to engage with good food-related activities and initiatives.



Cheryl Jones, the **Merthyr Food Partnership Coordinator**, is working closely with Food Sense Wales, one of six UK partners leading the Sustainable Food Places movement, to progress toward full membership of the scheme.

As part of this journey, a commissioned partner is helping to strengthen connections across existing networks, building on the excellent work of the VAMT Merthyr Food Prosperity Network and engaging key stakeholders. This collaborative approach will ensure efforts are aligned and impactful, shaping a whole-system approach to food in Merthyr.

Merthyr is now on an exciting path toward becoming a Sustainable Food Place—a milestone that will recognise the area’s commitment to improving access to good-quality, affordable food for all.

**Merthyr Food Partnership: Building momentum as a sustainable food place**

**Rhondda Cynon Taf Food Partnership Achieves Silver Award and Launches First Food Strategy**



The **Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Food Partnership** has been awarded the Silver Sustainable Food Places Award, recognising the breadth and impact of work taking place across the local authority area. This achievement follows a comprehensive submission showcasing innovative projects and collaborative efforts to improve food systems locally. As part of this success, the Partnership has launched its first council wide Food Strategy, **Taith Bwyd**. This strategy sets out a clear vision:

Every person in Rhondda Cynon Taf can access nutritious, affordable, and sustainable food.

In the foreword to the strategy, Cllr Bob Harris, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities, highlighted:

*“This strategy builds on the work undertaken by the RCT Food Partnership over the past three years and sets out the areas of focus to meet our strategic vision.”*

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC, as host of the partnership coordinator, has invested over £1.3 million in food related activities and projects across the county in the last 3 financial years. This has facilitated community organisations to provide cooking workshops, food growing projects and community foodbanks and pantries to purchase provisions.

To explore the strategy, follow the Partnership’s progress, and get involved, visit their [new webpage](#)





**The Bridgend Food Partnership** has proudly achieved the Bronze Sustainable Food Places Award, recognising the collaborative efforts underway to transform Bridgend into a thriving Sustainable Food Place. The Partnership's mission is clear:

To create a healthier, more sustainable Bridgend for everyone—across all towns and valleys in the county borough.

One of many exciting initiatives is participation in the Welsh Veg in Schools scheme, working with local organic growers to improve the quality and sustainability of produce in primary school lunches. The partnership is also collaborating with Slade Farm Organics to offer vegetable-growing courses that build community resilience, including piloting an innovative satellite schools project with Afon y Felin Primary where pupils learn more about food growing and establish their own growing space at school.

Hear directly from the Partnership in the above video clip.

To follow their progress and get involved, visit their new [website](#):

**Bridgend food partnership achieves bronze award and launches new website**



## Driving Regional Collaboration for Food Resilience

### **New Public Services Board Food Resilience Sub-Board**

This summer, the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board approved a proposal from the Healthy Weight Team, Food Partnership Coordinators, and Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT) to establish a Food Resilience Sub-Board.

The Sub-Board will drive regional, long-term, whole-system collaboration to strengthen food resilience across our communities. Its purpose is to:

- Align local action with regional and national priorities
- Inform and influence wider policy
- Coordinate longer-term projects at a regional level
- Improve information flows between communities, food networks, public services, and Welsh Government

By connecting local initiatives with strategic decision-making, this approach will amplify the impact of existing partnerships and ensure community needs shape future policy.

The Sub-Board held its first meeting in November, marking an important step toward building a more resilient food system. We'll share further updates as this work progresses.



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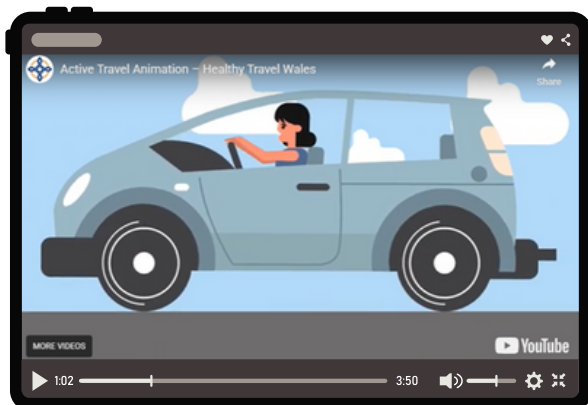
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## Healthy Travel Charter Launch



The Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) Healthy Travel Charter was launched in July 2025, led by CTM Public Services Board (PSB). Throughout the development and launch, the CTMUHB Healthy Weights team has played a key role in establishing the charter and supporting partners to embed healthier, more sustainable travel across the region.

Over the first year, the Healthy Weights team has contributed to shaping the Charter's priorities, coordinating engagement with PSB partners, and embedding healthy travel within wider prevention and wellbeing agendas. By aligning healthy travel with CTMUHB's broader aims of improving population health, reducing inequalities, and supporting healthier weight pathways, the team's involvement has ensured the Charter reflects local prevention priorities and supports a more joined-up approach to public health. Their work, alongside PSB leadership, has ensured a consistent regional approach that will contribute to reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, and enabling more active, healthier lifestyles for staff, patients, and communities across CTM.



For more information on the Charter including more detail on the CTM commitments please visit [Healthy travel charter.](#)

## Working with our Communities

The **Treherbert Initiative**, a collaborative effort using Human Learning Systems (HLS) and a Whole Systems Approach (WSA), it has made significant strides over the past 12 months. The initiative focuses on improving access to quality affordable food, physical activity opportunities, and promotion of local youth, play and family activities.



### Key Actions:

- Community Engagement: Gathered community insights.
- Skills Sharing - Appreciative Enquiry training provided.
- Collaborative Events: Supported by Grow Rhondda, Valleys Kids, and Treherbert OAP Hall
- Formation of Treherbert Learning Community (TLC): Local organisations met to explore key areas for collaboration: Improving Physical Activity Facilities and Access, Improving Play, Youth and Family Activity Opportunities, Promotion and Collaboration and Access to Good Quality Affordable Food.
- Community Ownership: Actively exploring, through collaborative conversations, how this work can become deeply rooted within local communities and stakeholder networks, ensuring shared responsibility and long-term sustainability.

### Impacts:

- Improved Food Access: Monthly market stalls and **lunch clubs** improved access to affordable fresh food and strengthened community and organisation connections.

*“ This partnership has allowed us to significantly upgrade the food we offer in our youth and play sessions.. The feedback from our families has been overwhelmingly positive; this link-up means better nutrition and a higher standard of food provision across all our activities (Amy, Valleys Kids) ”*

- Community-Driven Solutions: Initiatives like Active Baby at Home sessions increased early years play opportunities. **Treherbert Baglan Football Sessions** now include litter picking in the local community, offer a walking group and have Substance Use Awareness sessions with Barod. The TLC Explored the promotion and access of walking trails, development of a Borrow Box of play and sport equipment at the local park, and explored building a local Green Gym.
- Collaborations: A number of organisations in the area are now working much closer together and will continue to collaborate within existing networks.

### Learnings:

- Developed deeper understanding of community health challenges and the role our food and active environments have in this. The importance of collaborative working and sustainable funding for structural and long-term impact.



You can join the Treherbert Learning Community to help shape a healthier Treherbert.

Email: Grow Rhondda at [headoffice@growrhondda.co.uk](mailto:headoffice@growrhondda.co.uk)



Using Appreciative Enquiry, the team gathered insights from local mothers about their experiences and needs around breastfeeding, revealing the importance of early, high-quality support and accessible information. The findings led to renewed investment in peer supporter networks, increased

awareness of the National Breastfeeding Helpline, and expanded Welsh language resources. These efforts aim to rebuild community support, normalise breastfeeding, and contribute to healthier outcomes for families across Cwm Taf Morgannwg. CTM UHB are committed to improving infant feeding support as part of its Healthy Weight strategy.

[Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Infant Feeding Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)



### Listening to our families through Appreciative Enquiry

### Public Health Dietetics

This summer, our Public Health Dietetics team took part in training on Appreciative Enquiry – a strengths-based approach designed to spark positive, meaningful conversations with families attending PIPYN and Food and Fun sessions.

Appreciative Enquiry focuses on what is working well and building on it. Here's how it's making a difference:

- Celebrating strengths - we highlight what families are already doing well and their aspirations for the future. This positive framing helps boost confidence and makes conversations energising and constructive.
- Co-designing with families - we use the insights to continue to shape elements of the PIPYN programme and influence wider systems work with partners and stakeholders.
- Connecting the bigger picture – insights also feed into local action plans and policy discussions, strengthening community capacity and helping everyone visualise a shared future.

Shelley Powell, Dietetic Professional Manager for Public Health at CTMUHB shares some feedback, “The PIPYN team are prioritising these conversations with families, to ensure that we continue to learn from the local communities we serve. We truly value their insights and they are integral to ensuring we continue to design services and provide support mechanisms that facilitate improvements in our local food and activity environments.”



The Healthy Weight Team contributed to the [Welsh Government's consultation](#) on school food regulations earlier this year. The consultation sought views on the proposals which will see primary school menus increase fruit and vegetables, helping more Welsh children get their five-a-day, and limit sugary desserts, and fried foods, in line with UK dietary guidelines. The new proposals will ensure children are offered nutritionally balanced school food and drink, and that healthy eating is promoted in schools with the aim of improving health, wellbeing and attainment.

Our response called for a flexible, learning-based approach to implementation, supported by collaboration between schools, children, families and communities. We highlighted the value of a Whole Systems Approach combined with Appreciative Enquiry to tackle the complex challenge, recognising the wide range of factors affecting the uptake of school meals. With CTM facing a high density of fast-food outlets often near schools, multi-sector action is essential. Insights from local pupils underline the need for better food options in schools. By working together, we can create healthier school environments and improve access to affordable, nutritious food in and around schools.

## Further Useful Updates



### Sharing Knowledge and Influencing System Change

As part of our commitment to strengthening the wider system knowledge base, we've collaborated with some of our partners on four poster presentations that showcase our work and insights.

Poster Titles:

- [Play in Hospital Across CTM](#)
- [The Development of a CTM Public Services Board \(PSB\) Food Resilience Sub-Board](#)
- [Embedding Human Learning Systems in the Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight](#)
- [National Breast Feeding Conference](#)

Find further useful information, [healthy weight case studies](#) and key publications on healthy weight by visiting [our webpage](#)





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## Join Us in Building Healthier Environments – Together

Each year, our connections and collaborations grow stronger as more stakeholders join this network committed to driving system-wide change for healthy weight.

This is a complex challenge—one that demands diverse voices, fresh perspectives, and collective action.



Email us at [ctm.shapingenvironments@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:ctm.shapingenvironments@wales.nhs.uk) and join the network shaping a healthier future for all